DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 150 509 CG 012 176

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TITLE Supervision and Evaluation of School Psychologists.
PUB DATE 10 Aug 77
NOTE 7p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Counselor Performance; *Evaluation Methods; *Guidance Personnel; Models; Peer Evaluation; *School Psychologists; State Supervisors; Supervision; *Supervisory Methods; Surveys

ABSTRACT

This study presents a model for supervision and evaluation of school psychologists. It is based on the results of two surveys, one mailed to state coordinators of school psychological services in all 50 states, and the other to all Pennsylvania school districts which have their own school psychologists. The purpose of both surveys was to determine how school psychologists are currently supervised and evaluated at the state and local levels. The conclusion was that no single existing method seems completely effective or appropriate. The model should be adapted to fit the needs of individual users. General suggestions include: (1) evaluation and supervision should be multi-faceted, involving the supervisor, self, peers, and third-party evaluations; (2) the evaluation tool must relate to the functioning of school psychologists (versus that of administrators or teachers); and (3) many techniques which are often overlooked, such as consumer feedback and video-tape recordings, could be used to good advantage. (Author/BP)

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SUPERVISION AND EVALUATION OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS

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CURRENT PRACTICES—STATES

Information was obtained from the various states in the United States regarding policies and procedures of supervision and evaluation of school psychologists. Survey forms were developed and sent to all state coordinators of school psychological services. In those states which did not have a coordinator, the instrument was sent to the person designated to coordinate psychological services by the State Department of Education. Fifty survey forms were sent out and 20 responses were obtained.

The purpose of the survey form was to determine how and by whom school psychologists were supervised and evaluated as known at the state level. It should be noted that several states (North Dakota, Oklahoma, West Virginia, and Kentucky) responded by stating that there are only a few school psychologists employed in those states and thus could not respond to the questionnaire.

Results

The state coordinators were asked if they had a formal evaluation procedure for school psychologists. Only one state, (Wisconsin) replied that it had a formal evaluation procedure. The balance of the coordinators responded that the evaluation was a local matter. Eight states responded that they certified school psychologists and that if certified school psychologists are found in violation of professional standards that the certification can be revoked. Several states responded by stating that although they do not have a formal evaluation procedure, they are in the process of developing such. This appears to be a direction in which state departments of education are moving.

Since only one state had a formal evaluation procedure, the specific questions asked regarding how the school psychologist is evaluated were not relevant. The state coordinators could only express their opinions as to

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what may be happening in the local districts. Half stated that a teacher rating form was probably used.

The opinions of the state coordinators were felt to be of value since they are in the position to influence the direction in which evaluation procedures are going. Presently the state coordinators do not feel that their evaluation procedures are adequate. More than half rated them as minimally effective. One rated his procedure as ineffective. None rated their procedures as very good.

The school psychology coordinators were also asked if the person evaluating each school psychologist should be a certified school psychologist. Again approximately half stated in the affirmative while the other half had no response. Only one replied that it was not necessary.

The issue of a competency-based evaluation system was raised. Only Wisconsin, with its formal evaluation procedure, responded by stating that it has a competency-based system. The balance of the coordinators stated that they were not aware of specific competency-based systems being utilized in their states.

Thus, it can be seen that there is very little being done at the state level regarding evaluation and supervision. At the very least, the state departments of education should develop guidelines to enable greater accountability among school psychologists in the local districts. These guidelines should be developed in conjunction with the state school psychological associations and the National Association of School Psychologists and the American Psychological Association. Stronger leadership from the state level is necessary. Another concern emerging from these findings are that teacher evaluation forms are probably used in at least half of the local districts. This is regretable in view of the fact that the competencies and skills of school psychologists are not synonymous with those of teachers.

In order to determine what is presently being done in the field relative to supervision and evaluation of school psychologists, survey forms were developed and sent to all school districts in Pennsylvania which had their own school psychologists (N = 120) and to each Intermediate Unit in the state (N = 29). An intermediate unit is an educational service organization serving a large geographical area. One of the services provided to local school districts is psychological services.

The purpose of the study was to determine, in practice, how and by whom school psychologists were supervised and evaluated.

Information was obtained relating to the kinds of evaluation procedures used, the kinds of feedback obtained from consumers, and the ways supervisors improve the quality of school psychological services. Information was also requested regarding the kinds of evaluation (competency based, check lists, rating scale, informal, etc.) and who evaluates the performance of school psychologists within the local school district. Respondents were also asked to rate the effectiveness of their own evaluation methods.

Results

Forty-five of the 89 respondents from local school districts and intermediate units indicated that they had formal evaluation procedures within their organizations (50.6%).

Most popular direct evaluation procedures utilized were: review of psychological reports (83.1%), assessment of work habits and organization (79.8%), and direct observation of the psychologist's work (76.4%). Approximately half of

the respondents (53.8%) used such written data as logs, flow charts, etc. The use of rating forms was used by fewer than half of the respondents (39.3%) and almost none used video-tapes when evaluating school psychologists.

In the use of indirect methods, almost half of the respondents (47.3%) used the self-evaluation technique. 30.2% of the respondents used third party or expert evaluations, while only 22.5% used peer evaluation.

The respondents were asked to note if feedback from consumers was obtained and if so, what type of consumers were used. Feedback from administrators was used in 92.1% of the evaluation procedures, while information about psychologists was also obtained from teachers (71.9%) and counselors (67.7%). More than half of the respondents obtained feedback from parents (58.4%), while far less feedback was obtained from students regarding the evaluation of school psychologists (19.1%).

Respondents were asked what supervisors did to improve the quality of school psychological services. Most felt that the individual conferences supervisors held with psychologists were most important. Next was providing the staff with information about school psychology e.g., tests, books, journals, records, articles, and conferences. Developing inservice training programs and reviewing protocols as they related to psychological reports were also seen as important ways of improving the quality of school psychological services.

Development of competencies and competency based procedures is a current trend in education. When asked if they used competency-based evaluation procedures, for school psychologists only 16.7% responded yes, while the rest indicated that they did not use that techinque. However, 41.2% used a "regular teacher rating form" to evaluate school psychologists.

An important issue in the evaluation and supervision of school psychologists relates to whether that person should be a certified school psychologist. All of the respondents associated with intermediate units had training in school psycho-

logy or special education and all felt that the supervisor should be certified in school psychology. However, the responses from local school districts were different. 27.4% of the respondents did feel that the supervisor should be a certified school psychologist, however, almost 3/4 of those responding felt that this was not necessary. It should be noted that the form was sent to the Superintendent of Schools for each of the local school districts. They were asked to complete the form themselves, or refer it to the person in the district whom they felt was the supervisor of psychological services. Approximately 1/3 of the superintendents completed the form themselves, a little over 40% were completed by administrators with training in pupil personnel services, school psychology, or special education. Approximately 20% of the responses from local school districts came from other kinds of administrators such as assistant superintendents, curriculum supervisors, etc. Only 15% of the superintendents responding felt that the supervisor should be a certified school psychologist, while 85% felt that this was not necessary.

When asked to rate their evaluation procedures, the largest percentage (67.4%) felt that their procedures were "good, but could improve." Almost 1/4 of the respondents (23.4%) felt that their procedures were "minimally effective." About 4.5% of the respondents felt that their procedures were excellent, while another 4.5% believed that their evaluation procedures were ineffective.

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MODEL FOR SUPERVISION AND EVALUATION OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS

No one system of evaluation of school psychologists seems appropriate or completely effective. Many of the organizations surveyed have no formal procedures and over one quarter felt that their procedures were either ineffective or minimally effective. The proposed "model" may be adapted to fit the needs of individual school districts and educational service organizations.

Evaluation and supervision of school psychologists should be multi-faceted involving the supervisor, self, peer, and third party evaluations. All parts of this model do not need to be accomplished during one year. It is proposed that self-evaluations and evaluations by a supervisor who is a certified school psychologist take place regularly during the school year, depending upon the needs and level of training of the psychologist. A peer evaluation might be accomplished once a year, while an objective third party evaluation should be done every two or three years. This part of the model basically deals with who evaluates the school psychologist. It is felt that the supervisor should be a certified school psychologist who has training and experience in the field and training in supervision. This person would be available to determine the basic competencies of the school psychologist, to make direct observations of the psychologist's work and through help improve the functioning of the school psychologist. In addition, self-evaluation by the psychologist apart from the direct supervision provided by a supervisor, is also necessary. School psychologists might observe themselves on video-tape or listen to themselves on audio-tape performing their various tasks. A self-rating scale should also be completed whereby the psychologist rates the effectiveness of his or her performance. A more difficult aspect of evaluation would be having a peer or colleague observe a test administration, counseling, or review a psychological report and then objectively react to those observations.

Possibly the most objective, but also the most distant procedure would be to have a third party or expert evaluate the school psychologist, particularly if there were no trained or certified supervisor of psychological services available within the organization.

The evaluation tool should be developed to fit the needs of that particular organization, but must relate to the functioning of school psychologists, versus evaluation tools used for administrators or teachers. The evaluation tool must be flexible, but must also be able to provide the necessary information to help improve skills. One part of the tool should be competency approach which is based on behavioral objectives. This would provide specific behavioral objectives or competencies which the school psychologist must fulfill. This would easily identify specific skills in which the school psychologist is weak or strong. Areas of competencies might include assessments, counseling, consultation, interpersonal relationships, specific exceptionalities, parent conferences, etc. A check list or behavior rating scale would be a simpler version of the competency-based evaluation technique. This type of format cannot cover all of the possible nuances involved in school psychological functioning. Therefore, a part of the evaluation tool must allow for subjective comments relative to the overall functioning of the school psychologist. In addition, the tool should be signed by both the supervisor and psychologist, with an opportunity for the psychologist to react, in writing, to the evaluation.

Many techniques seem to be overlooked regarding evaluating the functioning of school psychologists. Feedback from consumers such as teachers, parents, and students regarding the effectiveness of the school psychologist's intervention and recommendations should be obtained. In addition, psychologists should make greater use of the video-tape technique to observe their own behaviors and functioning.

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